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Atlantis

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden ... Even so let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Matt. 5:14,16

A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one.
Shelley's Defense of Poetry

The city of light grew from a hill; at dawn,
as streetlamps flickered off like candles
caught in the small wind, it seemed
brooding over a nest.

One afternoon the Ocean called Atlantis:
the shadows lengthened into water
and the city sank to shine
only upon the fluorescent eyes of
fish in the maritime womb. Atlantis left only
her egg behind, floating on the waves.

Yet Atlantis will return when her child's white sepulcher
cracks; at daybreak there will be a sun
flowing as a river, the nutrient sac
of a bird that folds the earth in its wings
and intones the universe.

April Selley

Nightfall

Dusk slips over
sunset's head — night's on us
like a woman throwing off gingham
for black velvet.

Betsy Stachura

the Candles

1

White stems rising from
the black holes of the candlesticks, brass sticks
my Mother gave me for a wedding present.

2

White stems spurting out
flame petals: marigolds unravelling and gold
roses singed with a crush of garnet.

3

Inside the black holes is the dark
behind fire, of the caves where fire burned the bones of
animals, of mothers, and hunters before the time
the unutterable was given
a name.

4

The flames keep swaying, balloons of honey. The blue inside them is the blue of veins in an infant's eyelid. Staring at them
I feel myself pass through the blue, a swimmer through a boiling lagoon, who arrives on the other side of time beyond before my Mother's Great Grandmother who lit the candles in the kitchen of dirt floor and hens. Candlesticks of brass and two pillows of goosedown; that's all her granddaughters would take with them across the ocean for a new life.

5

I am walking in black lace
down inside the catacombs where in secret we light the Candles in Spain in our Catholic charade. Moranos, we lied and stole in these caves to return to the God of our Fathers in secret at night, blood, and dread boiling in the ecstasy of devotion.

6

The Inquisitor's hat burns
red over the black shackles of his eyebrows.
I will not remain his confidant long.
Soon they will discover my trunk and the candlesticks wrapped in black velvet. He will have me put to the rack, then nearly drown me before he sends me into fire, feeds me back into the crimson mouth the blue and twisted stomach of flame.

7

Now in the year 5736 I light the Candles, whispering the Sabbath Blessing. The white stems dissolve as my husband comes home, we bless the wine eat, make love. All the while they sputter their garnet, their lips of lapis. As we sleep the blueblack of black tulips fills the holes of the brass candlesticks, rolling the lidless eyes of the void, taking in its darkness, giving it back.

Jane Lunin Perel

Homesick (American film in Switzerland)

Sitting in a theater watching a movie:
a messed up cowboy trying to hustle in
New York, a coughing, gimpy little
Italian guy justs want to see
Miami. Through hell by bus they reach
that tropical paradise. The cougher
dies. The kid next to me says, "Are you
from the States?" "Yup," been here since
September." He's just back — three months in
the U.S.A. Then, "God, that must've
really made you homesick!"

Back to people stepping over
bodies in the street, beating
old men until their dentures
fall
bloody from their mouths.

Marion Hague

Night

A black African beauty.
An intimate
To whom one
Confesses
All.

Francis P. McAleer



Snowprints

The only tracks in the yard
are ones you have made feeding
the birds.

Knee deep and calm
you possess all the rows of sagging
pines, back trees huddling
makeshift woods, the compost pile, promised garden.

The only sound is seed
skittering across crusted
snow like snow
itself tumbling against
locked windows.

On my turn, I stretch
carefully into your
strides,
haste spil
ling
more than
you ever
would.

Patricia Slonina Vieira

Birdfeed

How sad you must depend on us
thru winter.

There will be mornings running late
we'll not have time to scatter
seed, shred bread;
and weeks will come with no room
for birdseed in the budget.

Forgive us, when we forget.
Believe me, we sometimes neglect ourselves.

But we will try to remember
your daily struggles this small way
keeping you our little companions
in song.

Patricia Slonina Vieira

Poem: on pretty women

I want to be skinny
pared down, like trees in winter
stripped of all this useless decoration;
functional, catlike
pawing through jungles
in taut limbs;
like the Empire State
or the Washington Monument
and a thousand flat oceans
with nary a wave
or rolling surf, whitecapped;
a placid sheet of glass
or stone, stretching,
touching a flat horizon
like Parsons tables and chrome
and steel,
contemporary, not rococo.

Ana Margarita Cabrera

Wages

He wears a yellow
baseball cap and blows
I guess it's a
police whistle
at cars

the little man
his too large trousers trailing
in the Star Market parking lot
as he collects the empty carriages.

— hey, mister, you
left your lights on!
He blows his whistle that turns
people around and stops
cars to

caution
and all the while he grins
and seems to marvel
at almost everything,
though nothing so much
as the electric doors.

I pass
and say hello. He grins
and nods. I think he's
retarded
and I'll bet they don't
pay him much,
if at all.

Bob West

in line at the bank

a child like a bird
rolls gum from his mouth
onto the floor & stretches it
across a tile, then dips & pecks, dips
& pecks until the whole bank
is laughing and
finally his mother sees her baby
bird dipping & pecking & picks him up,
only not until he's swallowed his worm.

Bob West

The Tell-Tale Tree

Tree! — the one impulse directed and distorted my reason. But why must you think me obsessed? No! But the tree! It spread its roots into my soul — its uppermost branches raked against my fancy. I could abide it no longer; the tree had to be destroyed before it drove me to madness.

Obviously you question the sanity of one driven to such extremes by the mere sight of a Christmas tree — but I tell you a college student bears no iniquity with less perseverance than the scintillating presence of an opportunity to commit a transgression of such peculiar nature — a joke of such practical proportions. Is it madness to spend sleepless nights eyeing the damned tree, tirelessly regarding its habits, its idiosyncrasies, its every movement? — insane to count each bauble, each ornament, each light, in anticipation of the breathless moment when those blinking winking eyes of eternity would be hounded into oblivion and my ordeal — indeed my mission — should end?

My method would astound you in its clearness, its utter reasonableness. It was exam week and I knew that all would sleep early — that the dormitory would be silent by 2:00 A.M. I chose the waning hours of the night

to watch my victim. Each night I perused its bizarre markings for several hours — planning each detail of my vengeance with uncanny accuracy — until fear and detestation hurled me from my watch into a dazed stupor. There was no sleep — my mind dashed furiously onward.

On the fourth night of my vigil, I sensed an aura of dim foreboding about the Christmas tree. As I watched its life flicker before my eyes the rays grew in intensity 'till they threatened to send me reeling back to my room a blind man. I could bear the sensation no more. Repulsion and desperation wrestled for control of my mind as I stumbled toward the ghastly thing. My eyes had become incredibly sensitive — they saw only the hideous leer of the ornaments and those outstretched arms of doom. My mind's eye whirled in a frenzy of delight as I grasped the tree — the hall lights seemed as tiny moons orbiting the multi-colored sun I dragged down the dormitory hall.

I crossed the threshold of my room and with a click all was darkness. I had pulled the tree's plug from the outlet! I gleefully stuffed the tree in my closet, carefully rolling up the cord and placing it in the floor of the closet — none would suspect me! I fell in an exhausted heap onto my bed and slept my first sleep of many weeks.

The following day saw my confidence increase. I knew of the initial shock of my comrades on the third floor when the absence of the Christmas tree was discovered. I suspected the routine search of each room on the floor, but my plans had been executed so as to leave me blameless. As the resident's assistant, accompanied by those whose unfortunate task it had been to guard the tree, scanned my room I pranced about with a mien both haughty and misleading. I boasted of the tree's beauty — I asserted their strongest denunciations against the perpetrators of the outrage, yet with twice the vehemence they had used. That these fools were blind to the irony only increased my confidence — I ranted, I raved — I beat on the very door of the closet in which I had entombed my tormentor!

Convinced of my innocence the R.A. and the others rose to leave. I begged them to stay — offered them drinks — insisted they remain. Need I describe the terror that gripped my soul when, from the crack between the floor and the bottom of the closet door, colored lights could be seen to blink once — then twice — then continued in the rhythm of a death knell? I shivered violently and fell to the floor! Fingers frantically pulled at the closet door and revealed the hideous object — I had sealed the Christmas tree living in the closet!

The Crucifixion

1

Perched
about to fly
you wonder about the ground.

2

Satan struggles
in hot ice
tepid blood
frothing from his mouth
congeals on matted hair.

3

Never has a tree
been climbed
so gracefully.

4

Can the wood of this chair
spit splinters through
my back?

5

Golgotha
defends
the dance.

Michael M. Woody



The Dance

Time,
It sifts through my slender young hands
Like an autumn leaf trickling down,
In a thick, balmy breeze.
While it is gliding easily,
With alacrity it drops.

Drifting in middle-air, on an unrestricted course,
I am like the April bud,
With rich, flowing veins, bursting, sizzling, with ardent
aspirations.

Ethos and Thanatos

The pleasure of a young, almost fetal love,
Rushes like a choir of crashing grasshopper calls,
Bounding blindly to anyone who'll hear.

Then, the agony of a round woman's first fall,
Or a late lover's last gasp,
Somehow slither in bearing equal intensity as
A spasm in bliss,
Or the rigid throp of beginner's widowhood.

The days become nights, and the love becomes hate.
All in one dance of a fleeting leaf.

Elizabeth Waller-Bilodeau